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ABSTRACT

In a survey of the nation's nearly 1100 junior colleges, and with a response of nearly 90 percent, the following statistical evidence was derived concerning journalism programs: of the 936 junior colleges responding to the survey, 553 (59%) reported offering some journalism instruction; 207 of these 553 schools (37%) employ a journalism teacher with the equivalent of a college major in journalism; and of the personnel reported as teaching journalism, at least 112 have no academic training in journalism. These findings indicate that an acceptable standard of journalism education is not being met. The ideal junior college journalism program must be based on the following assumptions: (1) that the junior college journalism teacher is professionally competent and will teach courses that are academically respectable; (2) that junior college administrations will support journalism instruction on a par with other academic disciplines, and not as a "production unit" or "extracurricular" activity; and (3) that budget facilities will be adequate, and teacher loads will be reasonable. (LL)

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ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT OF JOURNALISM IN THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

Dr. Frank Deaver

In August, 1968, Paul Swensson, then executive director of the Newspaper Fund, told senior college and university journalism educators that by 1975, "the majority of your incoming students are going to arrive from junior colleges." The prediction is on the way to becoming true. For some of those students the transition is a comfortable one. For others it is tragic.

A recent study of junior college journalism instruction makes two conclusions equally inescapable. First, a majority of junior colleges now offering courses in journalism are doing so under conditions that make such credits of questionable academic value. And second, a large minority of junior colleges reap the resulting harvest of doubt, with respect to their academically sound journalism programs.

The dichotomy is unfortunate in both instances. In the former, students trustingly accept credits that may not transfer--or worse, that may lead them into advanced courses for which they lack prerequisite understanding. In the second, students may experience difficulty getting transfer credit for journalism instruction that has been of the highest quality.

An awareness of the problem has been growing for several years. Studies based on samples of up to 350 junior colleges have resulted in almost unanimous observations. A University of Iowa journalism professor, Lester Benz, wrote in 1967 that in many junior colleges, journalism courses exist only to staff school publications. A study completed in 1969 by the American Society of Journalism School Administrators (ASJSA) found production of junior college student publications to be "the primary purpose of their instruction." The consistent observation of these and other studies is that on too many two-year campuses, journalism exists for the wrong purposes.

If the previous observations were doubted in some quarters due to the sampling upon which they were based, a current and virtually complete study of junior college journalism bears them out. This author recently surveyed the nation's nearly 1100 junior colleges, and with a response of nearly 90%, statistical evidence of strengths and weaknesses is clear.

**Of the 936 junior colleges responding to the survey, 553 (59%) reported offering some journalism instruction.

**Of those 553 schools, 207 (37%) employ a journalism teacher with the equivalent of a college major in journalism [30 semester hours or equivalent in quarter hours].

**Of the personnel reported as teaching journalism, at least 112 have no academic training in journalism at all. (Only those who specifically answered "no hours" are included in this figure; those who left the question on academic preparation unanswered are not included.)

In analysis, then, it is apparent that in at least 112 junior colleges (20% of those teaching journalism), the teacher is totally unprepared academically to offer valid instruction in journalism. In 346 junior colleges, the journalism teacher

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could be described as less than adequately prepared, on the basis of typical standards for instruction in other academic disciplines.

A junior college publications advisor wondered how many of the junior colleges now teaching journalism would continue to do so if the subject were purely an academic offering, not related to publications production. She answered her own question with the estimate of "probably not more than a tenth." The findings of the current study apparently substantiate the validity of the estimate.

When journalism department heads in senior institutions discuss junior college journalism transfers, they inevitably complain that junior college journalism teachers are ill-prepared, overloaded, or both. Most journalism teachers in the two-year schools have their highest degree from a field other than journalism. Many of them also teach in other academic departments, and they commonly are assigned non-teaching duties that demand a great deal of their time but for which there is no corresponding reduction in their teaching loads.

All too often, these problems are rooted in an administrative view of journalism as being primarily related to school publications rather than to academic instruction.

Too often a faculty member is assigned the task of publications sponsorship for reasons other than his personal preparation or interest.

Too often that faculty member is over-burdened with apparently related duties in publicity, photography, catalog preparation, and club sponsorship.

Too often journalism credits are recorded by junior colleges for students as a reward for staff work on publications.

And too often, students find after transfer that they are ill-prepared to continue in advanced courses for which they have transcript entries of prerequisites.

Two points should be made very clear. First, it is not suggested from the research nor is it proposed by this writer that student newspapers have no place in journalistic instruction. Quite the contrary is true. The "laboratory" of publications production is just as useful to quality journalism instruction as the science laboratory is to instruction in its field. Publications production is a valid learning experience--but without adequate prior instruction, its benefits are minimal and may be detrimental.

Second, it is not suggested that junior colleges cease or refrain from teaching journalism. Again, the contrary is true. The junior college journalism curriculum can and often does equal the quality of that of many senior institutions at the first two year level. Typically smaller classes and a shorter student tenure on campus enable the junior college journalism student to receive more teacher attention and to more quickly become a functioning member of a publications staff. It should also be noted that students in their freshman and sophomore years are anxious to identify with a major field of study. If they are denied access to journalism until their junior year, it is likely that a percentage of them will in the meantime have been lost to another discipline.

The ideal junior college journalism program must be based on two assumptions:

(1) That the junior college journalism teacher is professionally competent and will teach courses that are academically respectable, and

(2) That the junior college administration will support journalism instruction on a par with other academic disciplines, and not treat it

as a "production unit" or "extracurricular" activity.

These assumptions should carry with them the expectation of adequate budget and facilities, and reasonable teacher loads.

Of utmost importance is consideration for the student. Journalism classes should provide instruction for his benefit, not production for the school's benefit. The journalism student who transfers to complete a major should find that his junior college instruction was approximately the same as that which he would have received in the first two years at the senior institution. Anything less is an imposition upon his time, effort, and academic good standing.

Junior Colleges queried	1073
Replies received	930 (87%)
Schools teaching journalism	553 (59%)
Teachers with major (or equiv.)	207 (37%)
Teachers with less than major	346 (63%)
Teachers with no journ. hours	112 (20%)